

000 happier and materially more comfortable than the average man in the civilized parts of Venezuela and that the Indian would be unwise voluntarily to adopt the mode of life of the latter.

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● [235] Poverty is unknown in Kamarakoto society because each household can readily secure by its own reasonable efforts almost everything that it needs not only to sustain but also to enjoy life. Native skill and industry are such that almost none of the imports are absolute necessities, and these too can easily be [439] acquired. A household may over a period of years need a couple of knives and machetes, a dozen fishhooks, five or six meters of cloth, and a half kilo or so of beads to fill all its requirements and desires beyond what it can supply itself. There is no household so poor that it cannot obtain these few objects.

000 But when people have to buy most of what they use, poverty becomes possible and inevitable. An Indian who must wear purchased clothing, instead of making his scantier native garments, who cannot build a house without a saw, hammer, and nails, who must buy saucepans instead of making clay pots, who requires bags and chests and the like because he cannot weave baskets, who must buy a bed because he cannot make a hammock, who, in short, depends on imported substitutes for what his ancestors made for themselves — such an Indian becomes poor almost automatically. In the first place, and specifically in this region, the supply of such things is not adequate even if their purchase price were available. The Indian who depends on them must thus lower his standard of living materially below the aboriginal level if he does not have the aboriginal skills.

This is the first point on which a concrete suggestion as to the guidance of the social trend in the region can be made: not to permit an Indian to become dependent on anything with which he is not reasonably sure to be adequately supplied for the rest of his life. For instance, not to tell him that it is immoral to go without trousers, if he is not certain to be able to buy another pair when those he has wear out, or not to teach him how to build a house only with European tools, if he is going to live where he will be unable to get such tools. 236

Even when sufficient supplies of manufactured articles are available, which is decidedly not true anywhere in this region today but perhaps will be eventually, the Indian is impoverished by their very variety. He desires more of them than he did of his own less varied products. This is supposed to raise the standard of living. It is only reasonable to doubt whether it makes for greater happiness or well-being, but this question is purely academic since the stimulation of desire does occur and can hardly be controlled in any way. In practice the result may really be not a raising but a lowering of the general standard of living, not only because relatively unnecessary objects may be obtained in preference to necessities, but also and mainly because the Indian is not now spending his labor directly and efficiently on his own scale of living, but is using it for trade in an open market against workmen of still lower standards and to pay

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^ [see footnote on p. 334, category 116 - Analysis]